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WEDNESDAY

Community Turns Out In Large Numbers For African American Legislative Day

OLYMPIA — Nearly 1,300 adults and children joined Gov. Chris Gregoire, Sen. Rosa Franklin, Rep. Eric Pettigrew and King County Executive Ron Sims in commemorating African American Legislative Day, a day-long event raising awareness and advancing issues facing Black people in Washington. The event also features motivational speakers, workshops and youth programs.

Gregoire's remarks centered on the importance of bringing a seamless education system to all of Washington's children.

"The key to a better life for Washingtonians is an education system that prepares our children to thrive in a global economy," Gregoire said. "In the past three years, we've made significant investments to create a world-class, seamless education system for all of us."

The governor listed a number of critical investments that have been made, including all-day kindergarten for thousands of Washington children, a new focus on math and science in elementary and high schools, and more enrollment slots in colleges and universities.

"African American boys and girls are going to have a better chance to learn in school, and the disparity between them and white children will shrink with Representative Eric Pettigrew's action agenda for education," Sims said. "His legislation and Governor Gregoire's efforts to provide a seamless education system for all are providing the strategic path that will help end the achievement gap and help more African American children have all the opportunities that a good education delivers."

The event also kicks off February as Black History Month, a remembrance of important people and events in the history of black people, celebrated annually in the United States since 1926.

"This is a golden opportunity not only to celebrate the achievements of African Americans who have helped America become one of the greatest nations on earth, it's also an opportunity for people to exchange ideas about solving issues



The Annual African American Legislative Day in Olympia drew a large cross-section of the African American community to Olympia on Monday, as young and old alike learned about the legislative process and advocated for issues that would promote the collective interest of African Americans across the state of Washington. Pictured above are participants in the annual event. Photos/Flyright Productions.

that cut across racial and socioeconomic lines such as access to high-quality, affordable health care and ensuring the academic success of our children," said Franklin.

"Civic engagement is very important," said Pettigrew. "It's imperative to stay engaged in the

political process. I encourage people to come down and let us know what they think about issues and goals they're working on, and, more importantly, to share ideas on accomplishing those goals together. We can only do it together."

This event is sponsored by the Commission on African American

Affairs. Created in 1992, the commission reaches out to Washington's black communities, recommending policies and programs towards the advancement of Black people.

Former Boot Camp Guard Cleared In Black Teen's Death Wants Job Back

By Melissa Nelson
Associate Press Writer

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — A former juvenile boot camp guard exonerated by a jury in the beating death of a Panama City teenager sued the Bay County Sheriff's Office on Friday claiming the agency was wrong to fire him.

Charles Helms Jr.'s lawsuit, filed in Bay County Circuit Court, seeks his reinstatement as a certified law enforcement officer.

Helms, 53, was among seven former Bay County Juvenile Boot Camp guards and a camp nurse acquitted by an all-white jury in October for the 2006 death of 14-old Martin Lee Anderson. A video showed the guards slamming the Black teen on the ground and dragging his limp body around an

continued to push for federal charges against the eight.

Bay County Sheriff Frank McKeithen did not return phone messages seeking comment about the lawsuit.

Helms told The Associated Press he filed the lawsuit because the case has damaged his reputation, his finances and caused his family emotional pain.

"I am really disappointed by the lack of support the sheriff has given us throughout this whole process," said Helms, who was the highest-ranking officer on the exercise field the day of Anderson's death.

Helms said the sheriff opted to fire the eight employees of the now-closed boot camp instead of suspending them without pay, and

Danielle Joyner Kelley said.

"Should this action be successful, he would be entitled not only to his job back but for additional relief for the stress he has suffered," Joyner Kelley said.

Helms, who had worked for the sheriff's department since 1994, is now working as a laborer at a Panama City chemical plant. He said the job is physically demanding, requires heavy lifting and pays less money than his job with the sheriff's office.

"It's manual labor, I don't get to use my military training, my police standards," he said. "When I was 25 or 45, it wasn't an issue. Now I'm in my 50s and it is," he said.

He said he has been unable to seek another job in law enforcement

read, screaming at the jury and the guards:

"I cannot see my son no more."

The teen collapsed while running laps on the exercise yards. The guards testified that they hit him with their arms and knees and used ammonia capsules for 30 minutes because he refused to comply with orders to continue running. They said they never realized he was bleeding internally and was not feigning illness.

A telephone call to the family's attorney and spokesman was not immediately returned Friday.

Helms, a former Army drill instructor, said he still thinks of Anderson as "one of his men."

"I had talked to him earlier and he had a good attitude and had a

Rev. Aaron Williams Accepts Position as Senior Pastor



Rev. and Mrs. Williams

According to the Mount Zion Baptist Church Pulpit Search Committee, Reverend Aaron Williams of Garland, Texas, has accepted the position as the senior pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church of Seattle. Williams

will become the church's 17th senior pastor in its 118 years history.

At the age 18 Williams accepted the call to the ministry. He was licensed to preach in 1981 at age 20, and ordained in 1992 at age 24. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sociology from Paine College in Augusta, Georgia and a Master of Divinity with an emphasis in Systematic Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas.

Upon entering the ministry, Reverend Williams, a native of Augusta, Georgia, served as assistant to the Pastor at Old Street Baptist Church in Clearwater, South Carolina. Williams

Detroit Federal Planned For African American

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Opponents and supporters of a 21st-century law dealing with affirmative action programs in Michigan are preparing for a court hearing.

The voter-approved measure bans the use of race and gender preferences in university admissions and government hiring and contracting.

Parts of the law have been challenged in court.

Seattle Center Hosts

Festival Sundiata: African American Festival returns to Seattle Center Feb. 16-18, with a river mix of performers, art, photography exhibits, retail food merchants and hands-on children's activities in Center House, Fisher Pavilion and Seattle Center Pavilion.

Guided by a theme of "Shades of Black - Colors of Success", the 28th annual Festival Sundiata presents powerful representations of diverse cultural traditions. It is the most comprehensive African American Black American cultural event in Seattle. Traditional drumming and dance set a rhythmic tone for